



Upaniṣad Series

# ĪŚĀVĀSYOPANIṢAD

*Including accented and unaccented original verses, construed  
text (anvaya) with a literal word by word translation,  
English rendering of each stanza, copious notes,  
Introduction and Appendix*

BY

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## PREFACE

ORIGINALLY this series of Upaniṣads appeared on the pages of the *Vedānta Kesari*, the organ of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, and subsequently they were reprinted with some additions and alterations. It has been acknowledged by all scholars that the Upaniṣads constitute the supreme achievement of Hindu thought. The sublimity of their soaring meditation, the infinite range of their outlook of life, their fearless exposition of Soul-consciousness, their determined assertion of the verities of Existence and lastly their broad synthesis of knowledge and experience, have all joined to evoke towards them in the Hindu heart a feeling of profound awe and respect, and made it love them as Divine Revelations, from the immemorial past. Moreover, to an aspirant of spiritual truth, the Upaniṣads shed a light unseen in any other scripture or literature of the world. It has, therefore, been felt as the supreme need of the time to popularise the Upaniṣadic lore. With this object in view, we have been publishing the original texts of the principal Upaniṣads with suitable annotations in the *Vedānta Kesari*. Some of these have been brought out in book form, and others also will follow.

The Upaniṣads as the name imply, embody esoteric spiritual knowledge meant for reflection and contemplation, and hence the deeper a man dives into the significance of the passages of these scriptures in meditation, the greater the hidden meanings he finds in them. And so the sole object of the present author in annotating the Upaniṣads is more to help such persons as are desirous of plunging into their spiritual contents than to satisfy the superficial reader or the mere scholar.

SHARVANANDA

## INTRODUCTION

WHAT are the Vedas, of which the Upaniṣads constitute the end and aim, the very crest-jewel? What is its source? What are its features? The great Sāyaṇācārya, to whose elucidation the present understanding of their meaning is mainly due, defines Veda as that literature which sheds light on the transcendental means of achieving what is wished for and avoiding what is disliked.<sup>1</sup> The role of the Revealed Scripture lies beyond the spheres of perception and inference, for it illumines us about 'all the divinities, moral and spiritual duties of man and Absolute Truth'.<sup>2</sup> Since man is imperfect, human deliverances, however exalted they may be, can hardly be accepted as final and infallible. Therefore on questions regarding transcendental facts a self-manifest, inherently valid, eternally existing, divinely inspired Veda alone can

1 इष्टप्राप्त्यनिष्टपरिहारयोः अलौकिकम् उपायम् शो ग्रन्थो वेदयति स वेदः ।  
अलौकिकप्रदेन प्रत्यक्षानुमाने व्यावर्त्येते ॥ Sāyaṇa's Taittirīya-saṃhitā  
bhāṣya, p. 2.

अलौकिकपुरुषार्थोपायम् वेद्यनेनेति वेदशब्दनिर्वचनम् ॥

प्रत्यक्षेणानुमित्या वा यस्तूपायो न बुध्यते ।

एनं विदन्ति वेदेन तस्माद् वेदस्य वेदता ॥

Sāyaṇa's R̥g-Bhāṣya, Introduction.

2 सकलदेवतानाम् धर्मस्य परब्रह्मतत्त्वस्य च प्रतिपादकम् वेदम् ॥ 1b.

be considered inerrant and conclusively authoritative.<sup>1</sup> The continuous unfoldment of the predominantly religious and spiritual culture of India for millenniums, governing the thought and conduct of the race, working through the moral and religious impulses of the entire people and drawing them ever to the realization of the highest values of life, attests to the greatness and penetrative influence of the Vedas.

The Vedas are transmitted from the beginningless antiquity through a continuous chain of teachers and pupils, who, relying upon the statements in the Vedas themselves, considered them to be eternal and *apauruṣeya*, i.e. having no human source. Of those who hold fast to this theory of eternity, some substantiate their position by arguing that since the Vedas are the only source of our knowledge of Dharma and Brahman which are eternal, and since the relation between word and its meaning is also eternal, the Vedas are eternal in language and content. There are others who view the unworldly and spiritual principles enunciated in them to be eternal and timeless; they do not subscribe to the other part of the argument, viz. the eternity of the language of the Veda, which, they would assert, is but the composition (*vākya*) of *ṛṣis* or *āptapurūṣas*—reliable and selfless personages who have realized those truths for themselves.

According to the famous *Puruṣa-sūkta*, *R̥g*, *Yajus* and *Sāman* were generated at the beginning of creation from a mental sacrifice of adoration performed by the divine *Prajāpatis* and sages with the Supreme Being as the

<sup>1</sup> ब्रह्मणो निर्दोषत्वेन वेदस्य कर्तृदोषासम्भवात् स्वतः सिद्धम् प्रामाण्यम् तदवस्थम् —Sāyaṇa's *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa-bhāṣya*, p. 2.

material of the offering. The Śvetāśvataropaniṣad<sup>1</sup> states that the Supreme Being creates Brahmā and communicates to him the Vedas. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka IV. 5. 11 has: "As from a fire kindled...smoke issue, even so, the R̥gveda etc....are all the breath of this infinite Reality." The Brahma-sūtras I. 1. 3 declares that Brahman is the source of the Vedas; and I. 3. 29 of the same book affirms them to be eternal. The Mīmāṃsā-sūtras I. 1. 18 establishes the eternality of the Word. The first stanza of Śrīmad-bhāgavata, voicing the view of the Purāṇas in general, states that God, the Supreme Truth, caused the Vedas to appear in the mind of Brahmā, the first 'poet'. Smṛtis generally state that the eternally existing Vedas were remembered by the Creator at the beginning of the cycle of creation and transmitted to the world through the succession of teachers and learners. Śrī Śāṅkara in his Introduction to the Gītā-bhāṣya, speaks of the imparting of the Religion of Work and the Religion of Renunciation, constituting the contents of the Vedas, to Prajāpatis like Marīci and sages like Sanaka, by Lord Nārāyaṇa, immediately after the creation of the universe, and also of the subsequent dissemination of the Vedic lore through that channel. These various accounts given in the authoritative books of the past speak for the inspirational quality of the Vedas and the great veneration with which they were looked upon from the dawn of Hindu civilization.

Even though the orthodox teachers of India do not assent to the dialectic differences and chronological strata recognised by Western scholars in the body of the Vedas, they have their own logical appellations, divisions



and classifications of the various parts of the Vedic literature. The Veda is generally spoken of as a vidyā and śāstra. Vidyā (from the root 'vid' meaning to know, reflect, possess, be) denotes wisdom that is gained by intuition or instruction. When taken as a vidyā, the Veda has two phases, a higher one and a lower one, parā- and aparā- vidyā, the one connoting divine wisdom and the other knowledge of everything else that tend to it. Śāstra is from the root 'śās', meaning to wish, command or teach; and hence Veda as a śāstra is either ajñāta-jñāpaka or aprvṛtta-pravartaka, that is, revelational or mandatory. The Vedas are also known commonly as nigama, śruti and āmnāya. Nigama implies a settled text handed down from beginningless antiquity. Śruti denotes a revealed text heard by the pupil from the teacher, and āmnāya is what is learned by repetition and reflection. Almost synonymous with aparā- and parā- vidyā is the division into karma-kāṇḍa, and jñāna-kāṇḍa, work section and knowledge section, the former dealing with religious rites and duties and the latter with God, Soul and Nature. It is generally held that this twofold division coincides with the external division into non-Upaniṣadic and Upaniṣadic Vedic literature. Such a view cannot be taken as well-marked and precise, since there is ritualistic material interspersed in certain portions of some of the Upaniṣads and esoteric and philosophic ideas in the Sāmhitas. So Muktikopaniṣad recognizes that 'like oil in the sesamum seed Vedānta is established essentially in every part of the Veda.'<sup>1</sup> We are therefore to take these names and divisions more as dominated by the spirit and purpose

<sup>1</sup> तिष्ठेयु तैलवत् वेदे वेदान्तः सुप्रतिष्ठितः I, 9.

that govern them rather than as mere formal or structural matter.

This leads us to the customary classification based upon the form, purport and style of the Vedic literature. These are the well-known divisions into Ṛg, Yajus, Sāman and Atharva; Mantra and Brāhmaṇa or Saṁhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad; and caraṇa, śākhā or bheda. Of the first division, the words Ṛg, Yajus and Sāman have a double denotation; primarily, Ṛg means a laudatory verse, Yajus a liturgical passage or formula (mostly prose and sometimes metrical) and Sāman a melody. These three species of compositions in their collective form were also called in a secondary sense Ṛg- Yajus- and Sāma-saṁhitās. Finally by extension the Brāhmaṇas annexed to these Ṛg-, Yajus-, Sāma- and Atharva-saṁhitās, the Āraṇyakas supplementary to them and the Upaniṣads, either embedded in, terminated by, or affiliated to, each of them, were also included by the name of the respective Veda to which they belonged.

The self-manifest Veda, which, according to the purāṇic account, was a unified plenary revelation made to Brahmā in the beginning, suffered much obscurity in subsequent ages, due to the confusion and want of care on the part of the learners. At the commencement of the dvāpara-yuga, therefore, the great sage Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana (Vyāsa) resuscitated it by clarifying and facilitating its study by his methodical arrangement into the four divisions Ṛg, Yajus, Sāman and Atharva and by making his four disciples Paila, Vaiśampāyana, Jaimini and Sumantu the recipients and transmitters of the four Vedas in the respective order. Disciples of these lenial heads, in course of time, multiplied and formed into groups separating

from each other and giving rise to various śākhās or branches. Each of these śākhās had its own reduction or collection of the given Veda preserved as its heirloom, differing not a little from the other. These were named according to the śākhā (school) to which it belonged, as Kāṭha, Kauthuma, Vājasaneyā, Mādhyandina and the like. The Muktikopaniṣad (verses 12 & 13) records as having existed twenty-one such śākhās for the Ṛg-veda, ninety-four for Black Yajur-veda, fifteen for White Yajur-veda, one thousand for Sāma-veda and fifty for Atharva-veda; about most of these we know nothing at present except this bare mention.

The next division, partly based on style and partly on purport, is the one into Mantra and Brāhmaṇa.<sup>1</sup> The Kalpa-sūtra defines Veda as constituting of Mantra and Brāhmaṇa. This division is internal to the above-said fourfold division; for, each Veda has its Mantra and Brāhmaṇa portions, the former comprising all chants and invocations (i.e. Mantras) and the latter everything else with the exception of the Mantras. The first three Saṁhitās—by which we are to understand the three canonical texts designated as Ṛg, Yajus and Sāma collections embodying the invocatory stanzas and the ritualistic formulas sung or uttered, arranged in hymns, books and other literary divisions—had even a functional basis. The popular viniyoga or use of the Veda was for the meticulous performance of painstaking and complicated sacrificial ceremonies which were believed, to bring

<sup>1</sup>मन्त्रश्च ब्राह्मणं चेति द्वौ भागौ—तेन मन्त्रतः ।

अन्यत् ब्राह्मणम्, इत्येतद् भवेत् ब्राह्मणलक्षणम् ॥

about directly or indirectly abhyudaya and niḥśreyasa, i.e. temporal prosperity and the highest good of life; and so all the parts of the Veda had to be interpreted in such a way as they might find place in this scheme either as invocatory, eulogistic or directive in their application. The four Vedas thus came to be associated with the four priests who were indispensable to the performance of a sacrifice, yajña. They are the hotṛ or reciter of the solemn hymns, adhvaryu or the performer of the material part of the sacrifice with the help of liturgical formulas, udgātṛ the chanter of the Sāman songs and brahman, who, although by name associated with the Atharva-veda, was the superintendent of the entire sacrifice—"the very embodiment of the sacrificial art and Vedic lore in general so as to be able to advise the other priests and rectify any mistake committed during the performance."

Among the Sāṁhitās or collections, Ṛg-veda is by far the most important; for a considerable portion of the other Vedas are repeated or adapted from it. According to the current Śākala school, it has 1028 metrical hymns sung in praise of various devatās or aspects of the Divine. These hymns of varying length, the longest having 52 stanzas, are arranged into ten Maṇḍalas or Books of which the tenth is specially interesting for the philosophical and esoteric material contained therein, although such information is not entirely absent in other parts too. To the Ṛg-veda belong Aitareya, Kauṣītakī, Paīṅgī and Śāṅkhyāyana Brāhmaṇas. Aitareya and Kauṣītakī Āraṇyakas supplement the Brāhmaṇas of the same names. The Aitareya and Kauṣītakī Upaniṣads are taken in as some of the concluding sections of the Āraṇyakas bearing those names.

The Taittirīya-saṁhitā of the Yajur-veda, also called Kṛṣṇa-yajur-veda, is the book of the performing priest or adhvaryu, and is for the most part in prose. Mainly sacrificial in purpose, it is a mixture of ritualistic formulas and explanations. There is another important book of the Yajur-veda called the Śukla-yajur-veda in forty-chapters, with its contents systematically arranged in a liturgical order. The Kṛṣṇa-yajur-veda has the Taittirīya-, Bhāllava-, S'ātyāyana-, Maitrāyaṇa- and Kātha-brāhmanas, of which the first is the most well-known, its contents being of such a nature as could well be considered supplementary to its cognate Saṁhitā. The Taittirīyā'raṇyaka is its appendage, in which is embedded the important Taittirīya-upaniṣad. There is also a Maitrāyaṇī-upaniṣad. The Śukla-yajur-veda, now chiefly preserved in the Mādhyandina and Kāṇva schools, has the famous Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa terminating in the monumental Bṛhadāraṇyaka, which is an Āraṇyaka and an Upaniṣad of great importance.

The Sāma-veda-saṁhitā is taken directly (excepting the seventy-five original verses) from the eighth and ninth Mandalas of the Ṛg-veda and set to the mode of Sāman chants designed to be sung by the udgātrī priest. Eight short Brāhmanas (Sāmavidhāna, Mantra, Ārṣeya, Vamśa Daivatādhyāya, Talavakāra, Tāṇḍya and Saṁhitopaniṣad) are known to belong to it, explaining chiefly the duties of the priest of that Veda and other allied materials. No Āraṇyaka is known now to belong to it; but the famous Chāndogyopaniṣad and Kenopaniṣad are very important supplements of the Sāma-veda. Like the other three Vedas, Atharva-veda has no important part to play in the yajña, and the brahman priest,